

## ***CHAPTER 1:***

### ***OVERVIEW, GOALS, AND GUIDELINES***

The White Pine County Water Resources Plan is designed as a tool to help guide the development, management, and use of the County's water resources. The plan sets forth the goals and guidelines for planning, defines the water resources and issues related to those resources, and provides recommendations for the long-term (fifty year) management of those resources. The White Pine County Water Resources Plan is consistent with Nevada water law and the Nevada State Water Plan.

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, the goals and objectives of the plan are presented along with the principles that guided its development; a history of the process that was used in developing the plan; and the relationship between this plan and other planning documents. Subsequent chapters detail the current and projected water use, the issues associated with the development and use of those resources, and recommendations. The socioeconomic baseline as of 2006, the hydrographic data for White Pine County, legal and institutional framework for decisions regarding water resources, and specific plans and management practices aimed at addressing water resource issues are included as attachments to the Water Resources Plan.

#### **Statement of Purpose and Goals**

**Underlying Philosophy:** White Pine County's water resources are its most precious natural resource and are basic to all efforts to preserve the environment and to meet the needs of area citizens by providing for their economic well being and improving their quality of life.

**Goal:** The White Pine County Water Resources Plan has been prepared to ensure that sufficient water quantity and quality are available in White Pine County for the next fifty years to maintain and enhance the quality of the environment, to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors to the County; and to expand and diversify the economy of the County.

The implementation of this plan is in the best interest of the County and provides the framework for cooperative management of those resources.

#### **Objectives:**

- 1) Define the existing surface and ground water resources in the County
- 2) Identify existing water uses in the County
- 3) Identify forecasted growth and future water demands for the period 2006 to 2056
- 4) Identify water supply issues and management practices
- 5) Identify short and long-term strategies for the use of water resources in the County to benefit its environment and its citizens
- 6) Implement water resources strategies and evaluate progress in meeting goals and objectives on an annual basis

In addressing these objectives, this plan has adopted many of the principles used to guide the 1999 Nevada State Water Plan. The guiding principles that were adopted in the development of this plan are listed in Table 1.

<b>Table 1. Guiding Principles for the Development of the White Pine County Water Resources Plan</b>
L. All of the water resources of White Pine County, whether above or below ground, belong to the public.
2. The water resources needs of future generations of White Pine County residents must be protected with a balanced approach that provides for the County's economic goals without detriment to the social, aesthetic, cultural and ecological values of the County.
3. The appropriation and beneficial use of White Pine County's water resources is administered by the Nevada State Engineer in accordance with the requirements of Nevada Water Law, and by state and federal court decrees and regulations.
4. Public education and public input are vital aspects of water resources planning and all units of local government, water users, and interested parties should participate in the planning process.
5. The White Pine County Water Resources Plan must be aimed at encouraging planned growth within the various economic sectors of the County,
6. Water rights in Nevada are treated like real property that may be bought, sold, or traded under free market conditions.
7. The White Pine County Water Resource Plan should integrate water supply, water quality, water use, and environmental issues, and should be used to guide decisions that affect the water resources of the County.
8. All water resource development and use in White Pine County should be conducted in a manner that is technically, environmentally, and economically sound, and consistent with state and federal laws.
9. The White Pine County Water Resources Plan is consistent with Nevada Water Law and the State Water Plan and prepared in consultation with the stakeholders in the County
10. Water conservation is an important component of the planning and management of White Pine County's water resources.
11. The White Pine County Water Resources Plan must be based upon an understanding of sound science and water resource evaluation and management principles.
12. The White Pine County Water Resource Plan is adopted as an element of the <u>White Pine County Master Plan</u> .

**Institutional Framework:**

Water resources planning in White Pine County is consistent with County policies and with existing state and federal laws, regulations, and court decrees. In general, the State of Nevada governs the allocation, planning, and management of the water resources, while the state and federal government have enacted a number of laws and regulations that govern key environmental issues that must be carefully considered in the planning and development of the County's water resources. See Attachment 1.

### **Development Process**

The elected officials and volunteer community advisory boards in White Pine County have recognized the need for long-term resource and development planning and worked diligently to accomplish planning goals for several years.

When Las Vegas Valley Water District filed applications on unappropriated water in White Pine County valleys, and the community did not have the financial resources to participate in the efforts to monitor the situation, provide adequate information to analyze the issue, or formulate a response, it responded by approving a special tax to raise the funds. The commitment of the citizens to provide the funding needed, and the commitment of the local staff and elected officials to attend meetings and participate in the process is evidence of the importance White Pine County places on its water resources.

### **1999 White Pine County Water Resources Plan:**

White Pine County's Water Resources Plan was originally written in 1997 through an effort initiated by the citizens of White Pine County. With no outside funding available, the original plan was written by in-house staff and a volunteer committee. The following year, a HUD Community Development Block Grant provided the funding to hire a hydrologist to help the County complete the plan. The revised plan was completed and adopted in 1999. Preparation of the preliminary draft White Pine County Water Resources Plan occurred with extensive public input through meetings of the Water Planning Commission and the County Commission. Preparation of the final draft of the 1999 Water Resources Plan involved extensive interaction with members of the White Pine County Water Planning Commission and the public attending Commission meetings. The consultant team received input from the Water Planning Commission and members of the public at Commission meetings held December 16, 1998, February 16, 1999, April 1, 1999, and May 20, 1999. In addition, members of the planning team traveled to Baker and Lund for meetings with residents in those areas. A draft of this plan was circulated for review and comment between May 20, 1999 and June 20, 1999. This final plan reflects input received through this public participation process.

### **2006 Revision of the Water Resources Plan:**

Following the completion of the Water Resources Plan in 1999, White Pine County continued to work with its neighboring counties regarding the Southern Nevada Water Authority's Clark, Lincoln, and White Pine Counties Ground Water Development Project. The community realized the need for a forum to provide basic information on water resources and water rights law as well as an on-going review of the Water Resources Plan and recommendations for revisions. In 2004, the White Pine County Commission formed a Water Advisory Committee to assist it in developing and implementing water resources policies. The Committee identified the need to revise and update the 1999 Water Resources Plan as one of its first priorities and conducted a chapter-by-chapter review. The Nevada State Division of Water Resources, Water Planning Section staff provided assistance with review and revision of basic hydrographic data and a review of the 1999 plan. In early 2006, the County received funding from the Water Rights Technical Assistance Fund to hire a consultant to assist the Committee and County staff with collecting the information needed to revise the plan. The draft plan incorporates the comments on the 1999 Plan from the Division of Water Resources. The plan was approved by a unanimous vote of the Water Advisory Committee, and presentations were made to the Regional Planning Commission, Public Land Users Advisory Committee, and Ely City Council; copies of the draft were made available for public review at the County Library and several County offices; the draft was submitted to the Division of Water Resources for comments, and the Water Advisory Committee sponsored a public workshop regarding the plan prior to public hearings before the Regional Planning Commission and the County Commission. The draft 2006 Revision of the White Pine County Water Resources Plan was approved by the Regional Planning Commission on August 21 and the County Commission on August 23 and it was made a part of the County's Comprehensive Master Plan by resolution.

### **Relationship to Other Plans**

The need to plan for the wise use and development of the County's resources, including its water resources, is a theme consistent throughout the County's planning documents.

**County and Community Plans** - The goals and objectives, conclusions, and recommendations of the Water Resources Plan are consistent with the basic goals, objectives, and priorities established in the County's comprehensive planning efforts for industrial and business development, agriculture and mining, tourism, and recreation, as defined in the following:

White Pine County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy,  
 Annual Planning Documents, 2001 through 2006  
 White Pine County Overall Economic Development Plans, 1982 through 1999  
 White Pine County Public Land Use Plan, 1998  
 White Pine County Land Use Plan, May 1998  
 McGill Highway Area Master Plan, 1998  
 City of Ely Master Plan and Business Plan, 1998  
 The Baker & Great Basin National Park Business Plan, September 1998  
 White Pine County 2002 Strategy for Tourism Development and Community Improvement,  
 White Pine County Economic Recovery Program Action Plan, 1992  
 White Pine County Silver Star Community Plan, 1990

Each of these County plans has been reviewed and the pertinent portions included in this plan, either through direct incorporation, or by reference. White Pine County is in the process of completing the 2006 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and updating its Land Use Plan and Public Land Use Policy. It is a cooperating agency in the Bureau of Land Management, Resource Management Plan process (which is in draft form) and it is working with the U.S. Forest Service on its Forest Plan process (which has just started).

The White Pine County Land Use Plan list nine specific policies regarding water resources:

1. The protection of existing water rights and water uses within White Pine County is of primary importance to the County's economic and cultural well being. Therefore, transfers in water use shall be carefully considered in relationship to the history, traditions, and culture of White Pine County.
2. White Pine County recognizes that the protection and development of its water resources are essential to its short and long term economic and cultural viability.
3. White Pine County shall consider the impact of water uses on existing as well as future water rights for agricultural, municipal, industrial, and domestic purposes.
4. White Pine County shall encourage alternative uses of water, including but not limited to geothermal uses and hydroelectric power.
5. White Pine County shall actively engage in providing opportunity for the development of water-based agriculture within the County.
6. It is the intent of the White Pine County government to be notified of all state, interstate and other actions that have any impact on the water of the County prior to such actions being initiated.
7. White Pine County shall develop its water use policy to ensure both water quantity and water quality.
8. White Pine County shall participate in the development of riparian management plans in concert and coordination with landowners, ranchers and the appropriate public agencies.
9. No Wild and Scenic Rivers shall be designated in White Pine County without concurrence by White Pine County.

**State Water Plan** - In 1999, the Nevada Division of Water Planning issued the Nevada State Water Plan. The State Water Plan provides a great deal of information on the water resources and their use in White Pine County at the countywide level. Thus the State Water Plan serves as useful framework for the more detailed information presented in this plan. In fact, the State Water Plan specifically addresses the need for local water planning and encourages that this planning be done at the basin and watershed level, the approach used in the development of the White Pine County Water Resources Plan. The State Water Plan was developed over a five-year period to serve as a guide to the development, management and use of Nevada's water resources. The State Water Plan made a number of recommendations concerning water resource issues. These recommendations are summarized in Table 2. Many of the issues identified in the State Water Plan are also issues to White Pine County and are reiterated in the appropriate sections of this plan.

**Other Resource Management Plans and Planning Documents** - The various state and federal agencies that have stewardship over areas in White Pine County have prepared a number of plans that must be taken into consideration in water resources planning:

BLM Resource Management Plan, in progress

USFS Humboldt Toiyabe National Forest, Ely Ranger District, Forest Plan, in progress

USFS - Humboldt National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan 1986

BLM - Draft Schell Grazing Environmental Impact Statement, undated

BLM - Proposed Egan Resource Management Plan and Final E.I.S., 1984

BLM - Egan Resource Area Record of Decision, 1987

BLM - White Pine Power Project Final Environmental Impact Statement, 1984

NPS - Final General Management Plan Development Concepts Plans and Environment Statement Great Basin National Park, 1992

State of Nevada Water Conservation Planning Guide

Goshute Tribe - Deep Creek Watershed Coordinated Resource Management Plan

White Pine County Elk Management Plan, March 1999 (Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners)

As 93 percent of White Pine County's lands are under the stewardship of federal agencies, these documents are important in formulating the issues and management practices contained in this plan. Information contained in these documents related to water resources was incorporated into the White Pine County Water Resources Plan either through direct incorporation, or by reference.

**USGS, Basin And Range Carbonate Aquifer System Study:** In 2004, Congress funded the Basin and Range Carbonate Aquifer System Study (BARCASS) project through an appropriation in the Lincoln County Conservation, Recreation, and Development Act to study water resources in White Pine and Lincoln County. The study is underway and meetings are held in White Pine County on a regular basis to report its progress. The draft BARCASS study is scheduled for release in 2007 and results will be used to assist White Pine County in refining its Water Resources Plan

**Table 2 Nevada State Water Resources Plan, Recommendations**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Issues</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<b>Water Supply and Allocation</b>	Water Conservation	Establish state Office of Conservation; revise plan requirements; formalize credits for conservation; technical assistance to farmers; fund demonstration projects; meter public supplies; increase reuse of water; start water measurement pilot program
	Integrated Water Management	Refine perennial yield estimates; increase recharge/recovery projects; increase multiple source use
	Inter-basin and Inter-county Transfers	Recognize net value of transfers; ensure transfers are justified, environmentally sound, consistent with regional plans, and do not unduly limit growth; encourage mitigation plans; provide assistance to local government; additional research on water banking and water marketing
	Water Use Measurement & Estimation	Develop and fund a comprehensive water use measurement and estimation program
	Domestic Wells	Notify counties of impacts of parceling; inventory domestic wells; educate well owners; fund regional water supply and/or wastewater treatment where water quality is impaired.
<b>Water Quality</b>	Non-point Source Pollution	Continue non-point source program
	Comprehensive Ground Water Protection and Management	Support state groundwater protection program; develop monitoring network; support evaluation of gasoline additives; expand regional water supplies where septic tank pollution is an issue
<b>Resource Conservation and Recreational Uses</b>	Maintenance of Recreational Values	Continued resource evaluation and planning; continue acquisition of water rights for recreational purposes; increase watershed and water recreation research and management
	Water for Wildlife and Environmental Purposes	Develop integrated plan for management; adopt policy encouraging acquisition of water rights for wildlife; establish incentive based restoration programs; establish working group of experts to study alternative water supplies for wildlife
<b>Flood Management</b>	Flood Management in Nevada	Develop modeling capability; develop plan to update flood maps; basin planning; review watershed management plans
<b>Water Planning and Management</b>	Watershed Planning and Management	Develop planning strategy; support local planning; continue basin plans; fund planning
	Water Resources Data Management	Develop GIS; establish water use, water level, and water quality monitoring networks; support research projects to update perennial yield estimates
	Water Planning Assistance to Local Governments	Enhance assistance to local governments; improve water use measurements and estimates; improve data management and sharing; enhance management and planning
	Water Education	Expand water education funding and staffing; increase program evaluation and coordination with water education activities

2006 WHITE PINE COUNTY WATER RESOURCES PLAN  
CHAPTER 1, RESOURCES

1. Nevada Division of Water Planning, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; Nevada State Water Plan, Summary; Part 1, Background and Resource Assessment; Part 2, Water Use and Forecasts; Part 3, Water Planning and Management Issues; Appendices; March 1999.
2. U.S.G.S., BARCASS website, [usgs.gov/barcass/index.htm](http://usgs.gov/barcass/index.htm).
3. White Pine County, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, 2005
4. White Pine County, 1999 Water Resources Plan